This is the author's translation of his paper originally published in Russian in
Diskretnyi Analiz, issue 31, 61–70, 91 (1977),
Novosibirsk, Institute of Mathematics
of the Siberian Branch of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR;
http://www.ams.org/mathscinet-getitem?mr=543806
http://www.zentralblatt-math.org/zmath/en/advanced/?q=an:435.05025;
The Russian original can be downloaded from
http://logic.pdmi.ras.ru/~yumat/papers/28_paper/28_home.html.
The author is very grateful to Martin Davis for some help with the English.

UDK 519.1

ON A CERTAIN REPRESENTATION OF THE CHROMATIC POLYNOMIAL

Yu.V.Matiyasevich

1. NOTATION. We introduce notation for certain standard notions in graph theory. (Definitions of some of these notions are given below.)

By a graph we mean a non-oriented graph, possibly with multiple edges and loops. $n(H)$ and $m(H)$ will denote the number of vertices and edges, respectively, of a graph H. Let $H \leq G$ mean that H is an edge subgraph of a graph G, and let $H \preceq G$ mean that graph H can be obtained from graph G by contracting some of its edges.

By $C(H, k)$ we denote the chromatic polynomial of graph H, that is, the number of proper colorings of the vertices of graph H in at most k colors, and by $F(H, k)$ we denote the flow polynomial of graph H, that is the number of flows modulo k having neither sources nor sinks and equal to 0 on none of the edges.

2. RESULTS. We shall prove one theorem and deduce three of its corollaries.

THEOREM. *For every graph G*

$$C(G, k) = \frac{(k-1)^{m(G)}}{k^{m(G)-n(G)}} \sum_{H \leq G} \frac{F(H, k)}{(1-k)^{m(H)}}. \tag{1}$$

EXAMPLE 1. Let G be a tree, then $m(G) = n(G) - 1$. If $H \leq G$ then $F(H, k) = 0$ with exception of the degenerate case $m(H) = n(H) = 0$ when $F(H, k) = 1$. Hence,

$$C(G, k) = k(k-1)^{m(G)}.$$

EXAMPLE 2. Let G be a simple circle, then $m(G) = n(G)$. If $H \leq G$ then $F(H, k)$ is different from zero only in two extreme cases: when $m(H) = m(G)$, that is when $H = G$, and when $m(H) = 0$. In the former case $F(H, k) = k - 1$, in the latter case $F(H, k) = 1$; hence

$$C(G, k) = (-1)^{m(G)}(k-1) + (k-1)^{m(G)}.$$

In [1] the following representation was obtained:

$$C(G, k) = \frac{(k-1)^{m(G)}}{k^{m(G)-n(G)}} \sum_{H \leq G} \frac{w(H, k)}{(1-k)^{m(H)}}. \tag{2}$$

The function w was first defined as the sum of the values of a certain weight function with summation over all (that is, non necessary proper) colorings of graph G (formula 2.5 in [1]); later w was defined via a recurrent relation (Theorem VII in [1]). An easy analysis of the proofs shows that representations (1) and (2) termwise coincide, that is, always we have

$$F(H, k) = k^{m(H)-n(H)} w(H, k). \tag{3}$$

Thus the proposed theorem can be viewed as a relationship between the special function introduced in [1] and more traditional notions in graph theory.

The definition of the function w implied by (3) makes evident a number of its properties established in [1] to facilitate computation of the function:

- $w(H, k) = 0$ as long as G contains an isthmus (Theorems I and IV in [1]);
- $w(H, k) = w(H_1, k)w(H_2, k)$ provided that H consists of two parts without common vertices (Theorem II in [1]);
- $w(H, k) = w(H_1, k)w(H_2, k)/k$ provided that H_1 and H_2 have a single common vertex (Theorem III in [1]);

- $w(H', k) = w(H'', k)$ provided that H' and H'' are homeomorphic (Theorem V in [1]).

The transition from (2) to (1) is most interesting when G is a planar graph. In this case each subgraph H in (1) is also planar and we can find its geometric dual graph H^*. It is easy to check that

$$F(H, k) = C(H^*, k)/k \tag{4}$$

and hence we have

COROLLARY 1. For every planar graph G

$$C(G, k) = \frac{(k-1)^{m(G)}}{k^{m(G)-n(G)+1}} \sum_{H \leq G} \frac{C(H^*, k)}{(1-k)^{m(H)}}. \tag{5}$$

This result can be restated in a dual form:

COROLLARY 1. For every planar graph G

$$C(G, k) = \frac{(k-1)^{m(G^*)}}{k^{n(G^*)-s}} \sum_{L \leq G^*} \frac{C(L, k)}{(1-k)^{m(L)}}. \tag{6}$$

(This result shows, in particular, how one can find the chromatic polynomial of a connected planar graph G from its combinatory dual graph G^*, although the graph G itself isn't, in general, determined uniquely by G^*.)

If $m(H) \geq 1$ then it is easy to see that $C(H, k) \equiv 0 \pmod{k-1}$. This implies that, in the case when $m(G) > 1$, passing from (5) to congruence modulo $(k-1)^2$, we cam omit all summands except the one corresponding to the case $H = G$. Thus we have

COROLLARY 2. *If* $m > 1$ *then*

$$C(G, k) \equiv (-1)^m C(G^*, k) \pmod{(k-1)^2} \tag{7}$$

Putting here $k = 3$, we get

COROLLARY 3. If a planar graph G is different from the full graph K_2 and has exactly one (up to renaming of colors) proper coloring of vertices in three colors, then the graph G^* dual to graph G is also vertex colorable in three colors.

3.DEFINITIONS. Let G, H be graphs, and let $V(G)$, $V(H)$, $E(G)$, $E(H)$ be the corresponding sets of vertices and edges. We say that graph H is an edge subgraph of graph G (and write $H \leq G$) if $E(H) \subseteq E(G)$ and $V(H)$ consists of those and only those vertices of G that are incident to edges from $E(H)$. For the sake of validity of formula (1) we admit the case when $E(H)$ (and hence $V(H)$) is the empty set.

The operation of contracting graph G by edges connecting two adjacent vertices v' and v'' consists in removing those (and only those) edges and identifying vertices v' and v'' into a single vertex v; thus, if vertices v' and v'' had been connected to a vertex w by paths of l' and l'' edges respectively, then the new vertex v is connected to w by a path of $l' + l''$ edges. We say that graph H is a contraction of graph G (and write $H \preceq G$) if H can be obtained from G by a number, possibly zero, of edge contractions.

We take the ring R_k of residues modulo k as the standard set of k colors. By a vertex coloring of graph H we mean any function defined on $V(H)$ with values from R_k; a coloring is called proper if the ends of each edge have different colors. By $S(H,k)$ we denote the set of all colorings in k colors, and by $S^+(H,k)$ we denote the set of all proper colorings in k colors. In this notation $C(H,k) = |S^+(H,k)|$ is the cardinality of $S^+(H,k)$. It is well-known (see, for example, [2]) that for a fixed H, the function $C(H,k)$ is a polynomial of degree $n(H)$ with integer coefficients.

In order to be able to introduce flows on a graph H we need to fix some orientation of all edges, which will be done by denoting by e' and e'' the beginning and the end of an edge e respectively. When such an orientation is fixed, a flow modulo k on graph H is defined as any function defined on $E(H)$ with values from R_k. (It is supposed that if we change the orientation of some edges, we'll have to change the sign of the flow on those edges; all notions introduced below are invariant with respect to such transformations.) We say that a flow t is balanced if it has neither sources nor sinks, that is if for every vertex v

$$\sum_{e'=v} t(e) = \sum_{e''=v} t(e) \tag{8}$$

(the summation is performed in the ring R_k, that is, modulo k). The degree of degeneracy $d(t)$ of a flow t is defined as the number of edges e such that $t(e) = 0$; a flow t is called non-degenerate if $d(t) = 0$. By $T(H, k)$ we denote the set of all flows modulo k on a graph H, and by $T^{=}(H, k)$ we denote the set of all balanced flows. The flow polynomial $F(H, k)$ equal to the number of non-degenerate balanced flows was introduced in [3] (in [3] it was denoted $\phi(H, k)$; see also [4, Section 14C]).

If H is a plane graph, that is, we have fixed a mapping of it to a plane, then its geometric dual graph H^* is defined in the following way. Vertices of H^* correspond to the areas on which graph H cuts the plane, and the edges of H^* correspond to the edges of graph H: an edge e^* from $E(H^*)$ connects vertices v_1^* and v_2^* from $V(H^*)$ if the edge e dual to e^* separates the areas corresponding to vertices e_1^* and e_2^* (isthmuses of graph H correspond to loops in graph H^*).

4.PROOFS. Let G be an arbitrary graph, k be a positive integer. We will use the shorthand $V = V(G)$, $n = n(G)$, $S = S(G, k)$, and so on.

Let $\varepsilon = \cos(2\pi/k) + \mathrm{i}\sin(2\pi/k)$ be a primitive root of unity of degree k. Then for $r \in R_k$

$$\sum_{t=0}^{k-1} \varepsilon^{rt} = \begin{cases} k, & \text{if } r = 0, \\ 0, & \text{if } r \neq 0. \end{cases}$$

From this we get that for $s \in S$

$$\prod_{e \in E} \left(k - \sum_{t=0}^{k-1} \varepsilon^{(s(e')-s(e''))t} \right) = \begin{cases} k^m, & \text{if } s \in S^+, \\ 0, & \text{if } s \notin S^+. \end{cases} \tag{9}$$

Let

$$\delta(t) = \begin{cases} k-1, & \text{if } t = 0, \\ -1, & \text{if } t \neq 0. \end{cases}$$

then by (9)

$$k^m C(G, k) = \sum_{s \in S^+} k^m = \sum_{s \in S} \prod_{e \in E} \sum_{t=0}^{k-1} \delta(t) \varepsilon^{(s(e')-s(e''))t}.$$

Further we have:

$$\prod_{e \in E} \sum_{t=0}^{k-1} \delta(t) \varepsilon^{(s(e')-s(e''))t} = \sum_{t \in T} \prod_{e \in E} \delta(t(e)) \varepsilon^{(s(e')-s(e''))t(e)},$$

$$\prod_{e\in E}\delta(t(e))\varepsilon^{(s(e')-s(e''))t(e)}=\prod_{e\in E}\delta(t(e))\times\prod_{e\in E}\varepsilon^{s(e')t(e)}\times\prod_{e\in E}\varepsilon^{-s(e'')t(e)},$$

$$\prod_{e\in E}\delta(t(e))=(-1)^m(1-k)^d(t),$$

$$\begin{aligned}\prod_{e\in E}\varepsilon^{s(e')t(e)} &= \prod_{\substack{e\in E\\ v\in V\\ e'=v}}\varepsilon^{s(v)t(e)}\\ &= \prod_{v\in V}\prod_{e'=v}\varepsilon^{s(v)t(e)}\\ &= \prod_{v\in V}\varepsilon^{\sum_{e'=v}s(v)t(e)}\\ &= \prod_{v\in V}\varepsilon^{\sum_{e'=v}t(e)\times s(v)}.\end{aligned}$$

Similarly,

$$\prod_{e\in E}\varepsilon^{-s(e'')t(e)} = \prod_{v\in V}\varepsilon^{-\sum_{e''=v}t(e)\times s(v)},$$

so that,

$$\begin{aligned} k^mC(G,k) &= \sum_{s\in S,\ t\in T}(-1)^m(1-k)^{d(t)}\prod_{v\in V}\varepsilon^{\left(\sum_{e'=v}t(e)-\sum_{e''=v}t(e)\right)s(v)}\\ &= (-1)^m\sum_{t\in T}(1-k)^{d(t)}\prod_{v\in V}\sum_{s=0}^{k-1}\varepsilon^{\left(\sum_{e'=v}t(e)-\sum_{e''=v}t(e)\right)s(v)}\\ &= (-1)^m\sum_{t\in T^=}(1-k)^{d(t)}k^n\\ &= (-1)^mk^n\sum_{t\in T^=}(1-k)^{d(t)}. \end{aligned} \tag{10}$$

For every flow t from $T^=$ we define the subgraph G_t as the graph obtained from G by removing those and only those edges e for which $t(e)=0$; clearly, $d(t)=n(G)-m(G_t)$. It is easy to see that the restriction of a flow t on the graph G_t is a balanced non-degenerate flow on G_t, and, vice versa, for every

balanced non-degenerate flow t_H on any spanning subgraph H there exists a unique flow t such that $G_t = H$ and t_H is the restriction of t on H. Thus

$$F(H,k) = \sum_{t \in T^{=}(G,k),\ G_t = H} 1.$$

Continuing from (10):

$$\begin{aligned}
k^m C(G,k) &= (-1)^m k^n \sum_{t \in T^{=}} (1-k)^{d(t)} \\
&= (-1)^m k^n \sum_{H \le G} \sum_{t \in T^{=}(G,k),\ G_t = H} (1-k)^{d(t)} \\
&= (-1)^m k^n \sum_{H \le G} (1-k)^{-m(H)} \sum_{t \in T^{=}(G,k),\ G_t = H} 1 \\
&= (-1)^m k^n \sum_{H \le G} \frac{F(H,k)}{(1-k)^{m(H)}}.
\end{aligned}$$

The Theorem is proved.

Relation (4) is given in [3] without proof (see also [4, Section 14C]). For completeness we prove it now.

The addition operation of the ring R_k induces an addition in $T(H,k)$; namely, let $t_1 + t_2$ be such a flow that $(t_1 + t_2)(e) = t_1(e) + t_2(e)$ for $t_1, t_2 \in T(H,k)$ and $e \in E(H)$. Similarly, the multiplication operation of R_k allows us to multiply the elements of $T(H,k)$ by the elements of this ring: $(rt)(e) = r \cdot t(e)$ for $t \in T(H,k)$, $r \in R_k$, and $e \in E(H)$. Thus we can view $T(H,k)$ as a module over the ring R_k. It is easy to check that if $t, t_1, t_2 \in T^{=}(H,k)$, then $t_1 + t_2, rt \in T^{=}(H,k)$; hence $T^{=}(H,k)$ is a submodule of $T(H,k)$.

If H has an isthmus, then H^* has a loop, and thus $F(H,k) = 0 = C(H^*,k)$; from now on we assume that H has no isthmus.

Let us imagine that graphs H and H^* are drawn on a sphere. Let v^* be a vertex of graph H^* corresponding to a certain area among areas on which graph H divides the whole sphere. Let $e_1, \dots, e_q$ be the edges bounding this area. For the definition of flows these edges were somehow oriented, so now we can speak of the edges $e_1, \dots, e_q$ as oriented clock-wise and counterclock-wise (assuming that the "center of the clock" is at the vertex v^*). Let us define a flow t_{v^*} as the flow equal to $+1$ on clock-wise oriented edges, -1 on edges oriented in the opposite direction, and equal to 0 on the remaining edges (that is, different from $e_1, \dots, e_q$). Clearly, the flow t_{v^*} is balanced.

To a given coloring s^* from $S(H^*, k)$, we associate the balanced flow:

$$t_{s^*} = \sum_{v^* \in V(H^*)} s^*(v^*) t_{v^*}. \tag{11}$$

Let us show that for each balanced flow t on H there exist exactly k colorings s^* such that

$$t = t_{s^*}. \tag{12}$$

First we prove that the number of such colorings cannot be greater than k. To this end we fix a vertex v_0 from $V(H^*)$ and show that a coloring s^* satisfying condition (12) can be uniquely determined by its values $s^*(v_0^*)$. Because of the connectivity of the graph H^* it is sufficient to show that the value $s^*(v_1^*)$ is uniquely determined where v_1^* is a vertex adjacent to v_0^*. Let l be the edge dual to the edge connecting v_0^* and v_1^*. According to (12) and (11)

$$t(l) = t_{s^*}(l) = \pm(s^*(v_0^*) - s^*(v_1^*)) \tag{13}$$

(The sign depends on the orientation of the edge l), and this relation allows us to determine $s^*(v_1^*)$ from $s^*(v_0^*)$ and t.)

Because $s^*(v_0^*)$ can assume at most k values, the number of colorings satisfying (12) cannot be greater than k. Let us now show that indeed all k cases can be implemented.

Let us fix a spanning tree D^* of graph H^*. Let us take for the value of $s^*(v_0^*)$ an arbitrary element of the ring R_k and define values of s^* on other vertices of graph H^* according to the above described procedure using relation (13) only for edges dual to the edges of the tree D^*. Let us show that the resulting coloring will satisfy the equality $t(l) = t_{s^*}(l)$ for the other edges as well. These edges form a tree W. By construction of s^* the flow $t - t_{s^*}$ is equal to zero outside W, and thus its restriction to W is balanced as well. But the only balanced flow on a forest is the flow identically equal to zero.

In order to complete the proof of equality (4) it remains to note that a coloring is proper if and only if the flow corresponding to it is non-degenerate.

In order to pass from (5) to (6) it suffices to note that by definition $m(G) = m(G^*)$, by Euler's Theorem $n(G) - m(G) + n(G^*) = 1 + s$, and there is a natural one-to-one correspondence between the sets $\{H^* | H \leq G\}$ and $\{L | L \preceq G^*\}$: namely, H^* is obtained from G^* by contracting edges dual to edges from $V(G) \setminus V(H)$.

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Received by the editorial board
on April 1, 1977